DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 933 IR 013 318

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TITLE The Potential for Professional Certification in the Field of Instructional/Training Design.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 7p.; In: Instructional Development: The State of the Art, II; see IR 013 273. For volume I, see ED 292 444.
PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Certification; Higher Education; *Instructional Development; *Professional Associations; *Professional Recognition; *Qualifications; Skill Analysis; Standards
IDENTIFIERS *Association for Educational Communications Tech

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers the need for professional certification of instructional developers and describes the work of various organizations in this area. The differences between certification, accreditation, and licensure are examined, and the certification efforts of the Division of Instructional Development (DID) of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) is detailed. The work of the DID certification task force is discussed, and the listing of instructional development competencies developed by this task force is presented. Certification efforts by other organizations are also described, including those of the American Society for Testing and Development (ASTD) and a joint task force of the DID and the National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI). (7 references) (Author/EW)

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Chapter 45

The Potential for Professional Certification in the Field of Instructional/Training Design

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Increasing numbers of people in many walks of life are calling themselves instructional developers or training officers. But are they in fact skilled in those abilities usually ascribed to the instructional developer or training officer? Can we truly be deemed a profession if standards are not prescribed and upheld for those practicing in the "profession"?

This chapter deals with the attempts of AECT and other organizations to deal with this problem through an exploration of certification.

Professional certification!
Who needs it?
We do!
No, we don't!
It'll advance the field!
It'll stymie the field's growth!
It'll cost all of us money!
It'll help secure jobs!

Few ideas have held the attention of professional instructional/training designers over the past few years more than the possibility of professional certification. The Division of Instructional Development within the Association for Educational Communications and Technology has been particularly active in investigating certification, and now other organizations, such as the American Society for Training and Development and the National Society for Performance and Instruction, also have begun to show interest. Whether professional certification will become a reality remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that it has emerged as an important topic in the instructional/training design field.

In this chapter I will trace the historical developments which lead to the current interest; distinguish among certification, accreditation and licensure; present the recently-developed list of instructional/training design competencies; and describe the current thinking about assessment (certification) procedures.

CERTIFICATION IN AECT

Of the three organizations named above, the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) has the longest history of showing interest in professional certification. Finn (1953), writing in the Association publication Educational Communications and Technology Journal (then called Audio-visual Communication Review) was the first to note that certification was a major ingredient necessary for professionalizing a field. When the AECT became an independent organization in 1970, a standing committee on certification was created to assist the Association's state affiliates to identify proper job titles and descriptions for teacher education certification. In 1977, the AECT published Educational Technology: Definition and Glossary of Terms which noted that the field still lacked a certification program. In that same year, the AECT Board of Directors created a special task force to study professional certification and develop a set of recommenda-

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tions. After two years of work, the task force presented a Final Report to the Board which recommended that (1) the Association undertake the development of a professional certification program and (2) the three largest AECT divisions (Instructional Development, Media Management, and Media Design and Production) be responsible for delineating the competencies in each area and specifying the assessment procedures. The Board of Directors adopted the Report in 1979.

The Report calls for the creation of a Certification Institute Board to oversee the certification program once it is developed. The Board would consist of persons representing practitioners, employers, academic programs and the three AECT divisions. All Board members, except the employers, must be members of the AECT; all would serve without pay. The Board would develop and manage the program and be responsible for updating the competencies and assessment procedures as necessary. There has been no movement by the AECT Board of Directors to establish such a Board to date (February 1983).

CERTIFICATION, ACCREDITATION, LICENSURE

Certification, accreditation and licensure are all credentials respected by society, for we assume that those persons who possess them have demonstrated their competence in specified areas and are qualified to perform in those areas. The credentials are similar in that they are one means of distinguishing between the qualified and the unqualified in a particular field. However, while the goal of all three is to measure competence, certification should not be confused with the other two credentials.

Accreditation is the process whereby an agency or association grants public recognition to a school, college, university, or specialized study program that meets certain predetermined qualifications or standards. It is an example of voluntary self-regulation of professional preparation by peer professionals. Usually a self-study by the institution or program is validated by a visiting team of professional colleagues; The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education is an example of an accrediting agency. Only institutions or programs, not individuals, can be accredited.

Licensure, on the other hand, is a mandatory legal requirement for certain professions in order to protect the public from incompetent practitioners. Licensing procedures are generally established or implemented by a political governing body that proscribes practice without a license. Certain health providers, such as physicians and dentists, must be licensed to practice. Licensure concerns only the individual, not the educational program or institution.

Certification is the process by which a professional organization or an independent external agency recognizes the competence of individual practitioners. It, too, is an example of voluntary regulation by peer colleagues. Standards by which individuals become certified vary considerably among professions, but the more common ones include membership in the professional association, successful completion of an accredited program of study, and satisfactory performance on written or performance examinations. Achieving certification means public recognition of the individual for possessing specified skills at a prescribed level of performance.

Professional certification should not be confused with teacher certification. The latter is a misnomer, because, in reality, it is a licensing mechanism regulated by a legal body. State governments, for instance, require that teachers hold a valid certificate (license) in order to teach in the public school system. Endorsements added to the certificate permit the holder to teach specialized subjects or to work in a specific area, for example, as a library/media specialist. In most states the only requirement for receiving a teaching certificate, and subsequent endorsements, is the satisfactory completion of a recognized program of study. Teacher education certification is intended to establish and maintain standards for preparation and employment of public school personnel, not to screen candidates for admission to a profession.

The subject of this chapter is professional certification, that is, the recognition by a peer group of its members' ability to practice in the profession. Professional certification rests on the assumptions that (1) those served by members of the profession cannot adequately judge the merits of professional services at the time those services are being rendered, and (2) only members of the same profession are qualified to judge whether one of its members possesses the knowledge and skill to practice in a competent way. The primary responsibility for establishing and maintaining certification standards therefore rests with the profession itself.

CERTIFICATION AND THE DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Given the preceding background, it therefore appears appropriate that the Division of Instructional Development (DID) within the AECT should be responsible for identifying the competencies for instructional/training designers and the means by which these competencies can be assured. This section will briefly describe the early history of the Division's activities in the certification movement and conclude with a presentation of the competencies list which resulted from these activities.

The DID Board of Directors first appointed a task force in early 1978 to participate with the larger AECT Certification Task Force. The Board charged the Task Force to begin identifying competencies in instructional design and to serve as a liaison between the Division Board and the AECT

Certification Task Force. The DID Task Force was very active: the first list of competencies was drafted by February 1979. Subsequent revisions appeared in February 1980 and again in September 1980. The latter version was mailed nationally in 1981 to all DID members for their evaluation and comments. Over 200 DID members responded with suggestions and comments; and more than half favored the idea of professional certification. In May of the same year, the competency list was presented at the National Society for Performance and Instruction Conference where participants examined the competencies and offered suggestions for improvement. Later the Task Force took all of the feedback information and developed the present list of ID competencies.

The DID Board of Directors tentatively approved the competencies in early 1982 and recommended that the Task Force turn its attention to assessment procedures.

Throughout their years of work, the Task Force members adhered to the following precepts with regard to the competencies:

1. The competencies would reflect the skill of a professional instructional/training designer, regardless of her/his current job, position, academic degree or type of training.
2. The competencies would be performance-oriented rather than academic-oriented.
3. While some employment situations may

Figure 45-1. Instructional/training development competencies.

A competent instructional/training development specialist is able to:

1. Determine Projects Appropriate for Instructional Development
   - *Analyze information regarding potential projects and decide if instructional development is appropriate.
   - *Discriminate situations requiring instructional solutions from those requiring other solutions (e.g., job redesign, organizational development, etc.).
   - *Judge the appropriateness of project selection decisions and provide a rationale for the judgment.
2. Conduct Needs Assessments
   - *Develop a needs assessment plan including selection of procedures and instruments.
   - *Conduct a needs assessment and interpret results to suggest appropriate actions.
   - *Judge the appropriateness, completeness, and accuracy of given needs assessment plans and results.
3. Assess Learner/Trainee Characteristics
   - *Distinguish among entry skills assessment, prerequisite assessment, and aptitude assessment.
   - *Identify a range of relevant learner/trainee characteristics and determine methods for assessing them.
   - *Develop and implement a plan for assessing learner/trainee characteristics.
   - *Judge the appropriateness, comprehensiveness, and adequacy of a given assessment of learner/trainee characteristics.
4. Analyze the Structural Characteristics of Jobs, Tasks, and Content
   - *Select and use a procedure for analyzing the structural characteristics of a job, task, or content which is appropriate to that job, task, or content and state a rationale for the selection.
5. Write Statements of Learner Outcomes
   - *Distinguish objectives stated in performance/behavioral terms from instructional goals, organizational goals, learner activities, teacher activities, and objectives written in other styles.
   - *State an outcome in performance terms which reflects the intent of instruction.
   - *Judge the accuracy, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of statements of learner outcomes in terms of the job, task, or content analysis, and/or judgment/opinions of the client (e.g., subject- matter expert, faculty, etc.)
6. Analyze the Characteristics of a Setting (Learning Environment)
   - *Analyze setting characteristics and determine relevant resources and constraints.
   - *Judge the accuracy, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of a setting analysis.
7. Sequence Learner Outcomes
   - *Select a procedure for sequencing learner outcomes appropriate to a given situation, sequence the outcomes and state a rationale for the sequence.
   - *Judge the accuracy, completeness, and appropriateness of a given sequence of learner outcomes.
8. Specify Instructional Strategies
   - *Select a strategy which is appropriate to information about the learner characteristics, resources, and constraints, desired learner outcomes, and other pertinent information and state a rationale for the selection.
   - *Judge the appropriateness of a specified instructional strategy for a given situation.

prevent a designer from exercising every competency, all professionally competent designers should be able to perform most, if not all, of the competencies when given the opportunity to do so.

4. The competencies reflect the skills of experienced, professional designers--as opposed to students, trainers or entry-level designers.

Figure 45-1 contains the present list of instructional-training design competencies. The competencies are not listed in a particular order; each is considered an integral component of the core skills possessed by a competent practitioner. The competencies list has appeared in Instructional Innovator, (December 1980, 25(9), 27-30), the Journal of Instructional Development (Fall 1981, 5(1), 14-15) and the DID Newsletter (August 1982, 13(1), 3-4).

The Task Force identified six ways in which the ID competencies list will be valuable:

1. It can provide experienced developers with a tool for self-assessment and professional growth;
2. It can provide a common set of concepts and vocabulary which will improve communication among instructional/training developers and other professional groups;
3. It can provide the academic and professional preparation programs for instruc-

Figure 45-1. (Continued)

9. Sequence Learner Activities
   - *Specify a sequence of learner activities appropriate to the achievement of specified learner outcomes and state a rationale for the sequence.
   - *Judge the appropriateness and completeness of a given sequence of learner activities.

10. Determine Instructional Resources (Media) Appropriate to Instructional Activities
   - *Develop specifications for instructional resources required for explicit instructional strategies and learner outcomes.
   - *Evaluate existing instructional resources to determine appropriateness for specified instructional strategies and learner outcomes.
   - *Adapt existing instructional resources.
   - *Prepare specifications for the production of materials where required (e.g., storyboards, lesson plans, script outlines, etc.).

11. Evaluate Instruction/Training
   - *Plan and conduct a formative evaluation (e.g., trials with subjects, expert review, analysis of implementation considerations, etc.).
   - *Develop a range of information-gathering techniques (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, tests, simulations, observations, etc.)
   - *Generate specifications for revision based on evaluation feedback.
   - *Judge the appropriateness, comprehensiveness, and adequacy of given formative evaluation plans, information-gathering techniques, and revision specifications.

12. Create Course, Training Package, and Workshop Management Systems
   - *Determine the components of a course/training package/workshop management system and state a rationale for the selection.
   - *Judge the appropriateness, comprehensiveness, and adequacy of a given management system.

13. Plan and Monitor Instructional Development Projects
   - *Develop and monitor an instructional development project plan (including timelines, budgets, staffing, etc.) which is appropriate to the nature of the project and the setting.
   - *Judge the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of a given instructional development project plan.

14. Communicate Effectively in Visual, Oral, and Written Form

15. Demonstrate Appropriate Interpersonal, Group Process, and Consulting Behaviors
   - *Demonstrate interpersonal behaviors with individuals and groups and state rationale for using the behaviors in given situations.
   - *Demonstrate group process behaviors and state a rationale for using the behaviors in given situations.
   - *Demonstrate consulting behaviors with individuals and groups and state a rationale for the behaviors in given situations.
   - *Judge the appropriateness of interpersonal, group process, and consulting behaviors in given situations.

16. Promote the Diffusion and Adoption of the Instructional Development Process
   - *Select strategies appropriate for promoting the diffusion and adoption of the instructional development process in a given setting and state a rationale for the strategies.

tional/training developers with information for program development;
4. It can provide a basis for potential professional certification.
5. It can aid employers in identifying qualified practitioners;
6. It can provide a basis for defining the emerging field of Instructional Development.

CERTIFICATION AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, two other organizations in addition to the AECT are showing some degree of interest in certification. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) is currently conducting a study to identify competencies in the training and development field (McLagan, 1982). To date, some eighteen training and development roles have been identified, e.g., program designer, strategist, needs analyst, task analyst, and evaluator. Here are the goals of the ASTD study: (1) to identify the accomplishments of persons who perform each role; (2) to identify the competencies necessary to produce the accomplishments; (3) to develop ratings scales for each competency; and (4) to identify/develop learning sources to help individuals build their competencies. Completion of the second and third goals will provide ASTD with the building blocks for a certification program if the organization chooses to move in this direction. There have been communications between ASTD and the DID Certification Task Force regarding joint cooperation, but no cooperative mechanism has yet been established.

The National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI) also has expressed interest in certification. The organization's long-range plan includes an objective to explore and recommend a certification process (NSPI Long-Range Plan, 1982).

In a refreshing demonstration of cooperation, the NSPI Standards Committee and the DID Certification Task Force agreed in 1981 to work together to explore the potentials of professional certification. One joint meeting was held in 1982; more are planned for 1983. The two groups have agreed to focus their combined efforts on the problem of assessment.

Assessment Procedures

The DID/NSPI (joint) Task Force decided early on that the possession of an academic degree or experience in the field was not sufficient evidence to insure competency. Hence, other forms of evaluating and documenting competencies were investigated. Attempts to develop paper/pencil tests failed when only knowledge and theory questions were generated. The problem was--and remains--to create an assessment mechanism which will permit observation and verification of **performance** as opposed to tests of knowledge or philosophy.

Some service occupations require practical examinations; for example, cosmetologists and barbers are usually required to demonstrate their competence in an on-the-job performance examination. Other professions are investigating the practical examination approach; in California, the law profession is exploring the feasibility of using performance measures to assess the competency of lawyers.

The National Board of Medical Examiners once required a "bedside assessment" during which applicants were observed and rated as they examined an actual patient. Lack of reliability, however, forced changes. The method used today is the problem-oriented, patient-management simulation. It is a paper-and-pencil simulation with a high degree of realism because the test takers have to perform as if they were working with a real patient. The approach has been criticized, though, on the grounds that it does not assess the physician's interpersonal and communication skills.

The DID/NSPI Task Force is currently investigating the viability of the assessment center concept as it is used in business, industry and government. The name "assessment center" is somewhat misleading. It does not refer to a place; rather, it is the name given to a series of assessments given to persons who seek jobs or promotions which require high levels of judgment and interpersonal skills. Candidates may be instructed to assume certain roles in a mock negotiation session, to interview a subordinate (played by an actor), or convince a committee (played by actors) to adopt a specific course of action. The in-basket simulation is also a commonly-used assessment technique. Trained observers monitor and evaluate the candidate's behavior throughout the various assessments and make judgments about the overall performance. The observers also serve as actors to play various roles when necessary.

The assessment center concept is appealing because (1) it does not rely solely upon paper-and-pencil tests, (2) it does not require the candidate to recall factual information, (3) it has high face validity and (4) it is performance-oriented.

The concept is not perfect, however. Complex simulations and exercises must be created in such a way as to permit the applicant to use many of her/his professional skills. This means the simulations must be reality-based and customized for the particular profession. Secondly, the observers must be extensively trained for their roles as assessors and actors. In the former case, there must be high reliability among the assessors' judgments; in the latter, the acting must be realistic and convincing. Third, the entire operation is labor-intensive and time-consuming, both in preparation and implementation. Fourth, only a limited number of candidates can be assessed at any one time.

Despite these drawbacks, the DID/NSPI Task

Force presently views the assessment concept as a viable alternative to the traditional paper-and-pencil assessments. Sub-groups of the Task Force are working to create simulations which are reality-based and require the candidate to exhibit many of the competencies presented in Figure 45-1. Once these are developed, they will be extensively tested to establish that they reliably discriminate between instructional/training designers and other professionals in other fields, for example, teachers, communications experts, media specialists, or evaluators. Even then, extensive field testing will be necessary to determine the feasibility of the overall concept.

Once an assessment procedure (whatever form it takes) is satisfactorily developed, then the Task Force will turn its attention to the administrative and logistical problems of establishing, coordinating and overseeing a certification program. When the Task Force will reach this point cannot be predicted at this time.

A PARTING WORD

Even if the DID/NSPI Task Force is successful in creating a certification process for instructional/training designers, it is not a fait accompli, for ultimately the profession will decide its fate. Recall that professional certification is a **voluntary** service; the members of the profession must **choose** to seek a certificate, or the program will fail before it even starts.

Regardless of the future of the certification movement, the act of self-examination which produced the competencies list, the value of the competencies list for professional development and for the academic preparation programs, and the insights gained while struggling to develop an assessment procedure, have and will add to our knowledge and perceptions of the instructional/training design field.

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